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Latin American Trends

STAFF NOTES

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LATIN AMERICAN TRENDS

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Western Hemisphere Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Argentina: Right-Wing Activity

There are strong indications that the right-wing repression by police and security services is not beyond the control of the government but is an integral part of the overall counterinsurgency effort. A variety [] report that all the security and military services are involved.

3.3(b)(1)

3.3(b)(1)

[] all branches of the armed forces as well as the federal police and the state intelligence organization have strong, effective, and well controlled countersubversive units. Their principal targets are the leftist terrorists but they operate against others deemed likely to aid the terrorists or sympathize with their goals.

3.3(b)(1)

[] the security services are cooperating more effectively now than before, as they gain experience and success in the anti-guerrilla struggle. There are fewer instances of unauthorized operations, particularly brutal physical abuse, and those that do occur can result in disciplinary actions. Not all authorized operations are legal, however, even under the broad state of siege provisions in force.

3.3(b)(1)

3.3(b)(1)

[] it is "obvious" that President Videla and other senior military officers "look the other way" with regard to right-wing activities. [] the senior officers believe that to rein in those involved would dangerously disrupt the success of the counterinsurgency effort.

An Argentine government official has stated that at present all rightist groups operating in the country in fact belong to the authorized counterinsurgency units and have a "clearly approved mission from higher

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authority." One such group, within the state intelligence organization, is composed of former convicted criminals and is said to have "considerable operational latitude." Another government official says that all counterinsurgency efforts by the federal police have approval from higher authority and that no records are kept on persons it picks up.

The impunity with which right-wing activities have been pursued over the past several months indicates the acquiescence, and perhaps the general approval, of high administration officials. The most spectacular such incident was the August killing of thirty suspected subversives and the subsequent public display of their bodies. The mass murder was reportedly approved by the commanding general of the Buenos Aires regional army corps, the chief of the federal police, and the police force's top security officer. President Videla himself was said to be perturbed not so much by the elimination of the supposed subversives, but by the publicity it was given.

Advocates of harsh tactics view the success the security forces have had against the left in recent months as justification of their methods. The hardliners will probably take last weekend's apparent terrorist attempt to assassinate Videla as proof of the need for still more strong measures. [REDACTED]

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